

SNP rift over business rate hikes

6 Feb 2017



Pressure is mounting on the SNP after two of its politicians voiced concerns over plans to significantly increase business rates.

Mairi Evans, MSP for Angus North and Mearns, and Stuart Donaldson, MP for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine, both admitted that the SNP's Budget could result in serious issues for many Scottish businesses in the future.

After meeting with Aberdeenshire hotel owners last week, Ms Evans told the Mearns Leader that she will be "asking both Aberdeenshire Council and Scottish Government what actions will be taken to mitigate the impact of the new values".

Mr Donaldson meanwhile, said: "We met some of the local business people to discuss their concerns over business rates."

He added: "We both know how vital small businesses are to Aberdeenshire and how much of a driving force tourism is to the local community".

The comments from the SNP politicians are the latest evidence of the growing internal division within its ranks over the Budget.

Last week during First Ministers Questions Ruth Davidson embarrassed the SNP after she revealed that the SNP's Banff and Macduff branch had cancelled a reservation for room hire at a local hotel which had been forced to increase its prices due to the rise in business rates.

Scottish Conservative MSP for North East Scotland Liam Kerr said:

"The SNP rebellion against the rise in business rates continues.

"Last week, it was the SNP Banff branch which pulled their business from a local hotel after it was forced to pass on costs. Now two local SNP politicians have jumped on the bandwagon as well.

"I wrote to Derek Mackay last week demanding answers, but I have not had any response at all.

"When will he get it? Fresh from slapping the highest taxes in the UK on people across Scotland, he has totally failed to face up to the outrage from across Scotland over these staggering increases.

"As Ruth Davidson said last week, if even the SNP can't support these rate rises – isn't it time the SNP leadership did something about it?"

Please see a copy of the Mearns Leader article here:

<http://www.mearnsleader.co.uk/news/politics/mp-and-msps-against-business-rates-hike-1-4355327>

News story: Business Secretary and TUC host corporate governance roundtable

From:

First published:

6 February 2017

Part of:

Business Secretary Greg Clark today discussed executive pay and how workers' voices can be better heard in the boardroom as he co-hosted a roundtable with TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady.

Experts from top businesses, institutional investors, unions and academia also took part in the discussion as part of a series of events to help inform the Government's consultation on corporate governance reform.

Chaired by the High Pay Centre's Director, Stefan Stern, the event focused on identifying practical ways of improving the connection between boardrooms and employees, and options for ensuring that executive pay is set on a fair basis.

Following the meeting, Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

"We have one of the most admired systems of corporate governance in the world and it is important that we hear from as many people as possible to understand how we can make further improvements to equip us for the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

"It was valuable to host a discussion with such a diverse group, all with the common goal of making sure Britain remains the place where business is done the best."

General Secretary of the TUC Frances O'Grady said:

"This is an important conversation to have about British corporate governance.

“Workers on boards is a common sense idea to ensure the voices of ordinary workers are heard at the highest levels. Common across much of Europe, the evidence shows that workers on boards are valued by other board members and work well for business, workers and the broader economy.

“We stand ready to help make it a reality.”

The full list of participants at today’s event is as follows:

Big business:

- Nationwide
- Rolls Royce plc

Institutional investors:

- Aberdeen Asset Management
- Hermes Investment Management
- Legal and General Investment Management

Business representative bodies:

- Confederation of British Industry (CBI)
- Institute of Directors (IoD)

Trades unions:

- IF Metall, Sweden
- Prospect
- Trade Union Congress (TUC)
- Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW)
- Unite

Academics and think tanks:

- Board Intelligence
- The High Pay Centre
- Involvement and Participation Association (IPA)
- IPPR
- Royal Holloway College
- Tomorrow’s Company

The corporate governance reform green paper consultation is open until 17 February. The views of businesses, investors, employees and consumers with an interest in corporate governance reform are welcomed. The full consultation paper and views can be submitted [online](#).

News story: Defence Secretary praises 'good partners' Croatia during visit

Sir Michael Fallon welcomed Croatia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Damir Krstičević to sign an agreement aimed at developing existing security and Defence relations.

At the Ministry of Defence in London today they discussed Britain's bilateral relationship and explored ways the UK can work together with Croatia on joint activities.

The Defence agreement focuses on developing the UK-Croatian Defence relationship including focus on: existing joint operations to support stability, peace and security; effective deployments together on future international operations; and further opportunities and benefits for defence procurement and equipment support.

By signing the agreement the Defence Secretary has also confirmed the UK will hold annual Defence talks with Croatia, which will be held at policy director level.

This year Croatia is contributing to the NATO high readiness force which the UK is leading, by providing a platoon of Military Police and a Civil Military Co-operation Team. Croatia will also contribute to the German Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania.

Croatia has around 100 troops deployed on operations in Afghanistan, where 500 UK personnel are based in Kabul to provide officer training and wider assistance and advice.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Croatia is a good partner of the UK with our Armed Forces' serving together within NATO in Afghanistan and in Europe. The UK will continue to play a leading role in NATO and I welcome Croatia's commitment to the high-readiness force that we are heading this year.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon and Croatia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Damir Krstičević signed a Defence agreement during the visit. Crown Copyright.

During their meeting the ministers also discussed the Defence Secretary's meeting with Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic in October and HMS Defender's visit to the port of Split last June.

The UK enjoys good relations with several states in southern and south eastern Europe. In September the Defence Secretary visited Bulgaria and

Albania as part of his regional engagement, and last month met UK personnel providing training to the Armed Forces in Ukraine.

[News story: Defence Secretary praises 'good partners' Croatia during visit](#)

Sir Michael Fallon welcomed Croatia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Damir Krstičević to sign an agreement aimed at developing existing security and Defence relations.

At the Ministry of Defence in London today they discussed Britain's bilateral relationship and explored ways the UK can work together with Croatia on joint activities.

The Defence agreement focuses on developing the UK-Croatian Defence relationship including focus on: existing joint operations to support stability, peace and security; effective deployments together on future international operations; and further opportunities and benefits for defence procurement and equipment support.

By signing the agreement the Defence Secretary has also confirmed the UK will hold annual Defence talks with Croatia, which will be held at policy director level.

This year Croatia is contributing to the NATO high readiness force which the UK is leading, by providing a platoon of Military Police and a Civil Military Co-operation Team. Croatia will also contribute to the German Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania.

Croatia has around 100 troops deployed on operations in Afghanistan, where 500 UK personnel are based in Kabul to provide officer training and wider assistance and advice.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Croatia is a good partner of the UK with our Armed Forces' serving together within NATO in Afghanistan and in Europe. The UK will continue to play a leading role in NATO and I welcome Croatia's commitment to the high-readiness force that we are heading this year.



Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon and Croatia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Damir Krstičević signed a Defence agreement during the visit. Crown Copyright.

During their meeting the ministers also discussed the Defence Secretary's meeting with Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic in October and HMS Defender's visit to the port of Split last June.

The UK enjoys good relations with several states in southern and south eastern Europe. In September the Defence Secretary visited Bulgaria and Albania as part of his regional engagement, and last month met UK personnel providing training to the Armed Forces in Ukraine.

[Press release: Five guilty of illegally fishing in Nottinghamshire](#)

Fishing without a licence has landed five Nottinghamshire anglers with penalties totalling more than £3,500.

Shaun Ryan of Bentinck Close in Newark, Teresa Cotton of Bramerton Road in Nottingham, Sean Bosworth of Hanley Avenue in Nottingham, Robert White of Melbourne Road in Nottingham, and Miodrag Katin of Woolmer Road in Nottingham

were all guilty under Section 27(1)(a) of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.

All were reeled in by Environment Agency bailiffs on regular patrols designed to catch unlicensed anglers in the act – and protect the sport for those who do follow the rules.

The five offenders were tried on Wednesday 1 February at Nottingham Magistrates Court. Fines totalled £2,750 but with costs and victim surcharges included, the five paid out penalties totalling £3,661.99. A rod licence currently costs from just £27.

Callum Underhill, Environment Agency enforcement officer, said:

Wednesday was a good day for the near-million anglers that fish legally every year, respecting each other and the sport. There really is no excuse – if you don't have a licence, pick one up from the Post Office or online before we pick you up.

It makes no sense to have the embarrassment of a court visit, a criminal conviction and a bill for potentially thousands of pounds when an annual licence is currently just £27. We think these cheats will think twice before picking up a rod illegally again and if they don't, our officers are ready and waiting.

The money from rod licence sales supports fish, fisheries and fishing, and protects the future of the sport. A small number of anglers refuse to buy a licence, cheating the sport and their fellow anglers.

For the minority who flout the rules, the most common offence is fishing without a valid licence, which could land them with a fine of up to £2,500 and a criminal record.

In 2015/16, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire enforcement officers checked 6,255 licences and reported 158 for fishing illegally, bringing in fines and costs totalling £45,517.

Last year in England, the Environment Agency checked more than 62,000 rod licences and prosecuted more than 1,900 anglers for rod and line offences, resulting in fines and costs in excess of £500,000.

Any angler aged 12 or over, fishing on a river, canal or still water needs a licence. A full rod licence costs from just £27 (concessions available) and is available from the Post Office either online or in a local branch, or by phoning 0344 800 5386.

Money from rod licence sales is invested in England's fisheries and is used to fund a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers including protecting stocks from illegal fishing, pollution and disease; restoring fish stocks through re-stocking; eradicating invasive species; and fish habitat improvements. Rod licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to

provide information about fishing and to encourage participation in the sport.

To help crack down on unlicensed fishing, the Environment Agency urges people to report illegal activity by calling its incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- Miodrag Katin, who was proved guilty in absence, was fined £660 and ordered to pay costs of £127, as well as a victim surcharge of £66, making the total penalty £853. Mr Katin was caught on 4 June 2016 on the River Trent at West Bridgford, Nottingham.
- Robert White, who pleaded guilty, was fined £450 and ordered to pay costs of £127.47, as well as a victim surcharge of £45, making the total penalty £622.47. Mr White was caught on 23 July 2016 on the River Trent at Gunthorpe, Nottingham.
- Sean Bosworth, who was proved guilty in absence, was fined £660 and ordered to pay costs of £127.47, as well as a victim surcharge of £66, making the total penalty £853.47. Mr Bosworth was caught on 12 July 2016 at Trent View Fishery, Hoveringham.
- Teresa Cotton, who was proved guilty in absence, was fined £660 and ordered to pay costs of £127.47, as well as a victim surcharge of £66, making the total penalty £853.47. Ms Cotton was caught on 2 July on the River Trent at Colwick, Nottingham.
- Shaun Ryan, who pleaded guilty, was fined £320 and ordered to pay costs of £127.47, as well as a victim surcharge of £32, making the total penalty £479.47. Mr Ryan was caught on 23 July 2016 on the River Trent at Gunthorpe, Nottingham.
- All were found fishing for freshwater fish or eels with an unlicensed instrument in a place where fishing is regulated, contrary to Section 27(1)(a) of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.